

# Late penalty keeps Hearts in Euro frame

Ice cool Lawrence Shankland slotted in the sixth minute of injury time to claim his 26th goal of the season and salvage a point for a Hearts side which was criticised by interim boss Steven Naismith in his post-match interview.

The former Scotland international told BBC Scotland Sport that the first 45 minutes against St Mirren was not good enough and Irvine-born Naismith (pictured by *Nigel Duncan* at a recent press conference) felt his men lacked consistency in their decision making and said they needed to be brave.

He added: "Second-half we are up against adversity and we are down to ten men and we had our moments, we were brave."

It was Austrian midfielder Peter Haring who was shown a straight red card after 77 minutes when he tackled Mark O'Hara as he attempted to break up the left hand side of the pitch and referee David Dickinson immediately reached for his pocket.

Overall, Hearts enjoyed 64 per cent of possession during the game and had 474 passes against 264 from their rivals.

The point keeps battling Hearts in with a chance of European football next term as they remain in fourth place in the cinch Premiership five points behind Aberdeen who drew 0-0 with Hibs

at Pittodrie.

The Dons were fortunate as Hibs had a number of golden chances and their travelling fans also saw Kevin Nisbet's penalty kick saved by Kelle Roos who produced a number of telling stops during the 90 minutes.

It is Aberdeen who visit Tynecastle on Saturday in a crunch clash but, looking back at Saturday's game, St Mirren manager, Stephen Robinson, admitted he was gutted after his men surrendered a two-goal lead.

He said: "We were brilliant in the first half, and we had enough experience on the pitch to see us through. We got what we deserved probably in the second half."

Joe Shaughnessy opened their account after 36 minutes, stabbing home from close in after Alex Gogic had nodded on a Scott Tanser corner.

The Paisley men continued to press for a second and Mark O'Hara won a free-kick on the left hand side of the Hearts' penalty box in the fourth minute of first-half injury time.

Ryan Strain fired the ball over the wall and into the bottom right-hand corner of the net to spark major celebrations among the St Mirren fans in the packed ground.

It took Hearts until the 73rd minute to pull a goal back, substitute Nathan Atkinson was free on the right and was found by a superb pass from Kye Rowles. Atkinson made ground and then sent a perfect ball deep into The Buddies penalty box. Josh Ginnelly was on hand to finish at the back post.

And it was Ginnelly who won the late penalty from which Shankland levelled. The Nuneaton-born forward chased a long ball towards the right hand side of the penalty box and he was heading away from goal but ended up on the floor after Ryan Flynn was adjudged to have nudged the Hearts player.

Up stepped Shankland to place the ball well away from Trevor Carson in the Saints goal to leave Hearts on 49 points with third-placed Aberdeen on 54 and with fifth-placed Hibs on 48 and St Mirren, who are sixth, on 45